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ABSTRACT

To identify the major reasons why high school vocational agriculture teachers in Ohio left their teaching positions between 1970 and 1975, 134 former teachers and 118 current teachers were surveyed. Former teachers were asked to rank forty-five factors on the extent of influence each factor had on their decision to leave teaching. The five factors which were ranked as the most influential were long range occupational goals were other than teaching vocational agriculture; there were students in class who should not have been in vocational agriculture; inadequate advancement opportunities; long hours; and inadequate salary. An analysis of the relationship between demographic factors and influential factors revealed four findings, two of which are the following: as time spent in supervision of students' occupational experience programs increased, former teachers generally reported student learning difficulties and discipline problems as being less influential in their decision to leave; and the higher the reported salary during the last year of teaching the less influential inadequate salary generally became. In comparing former and current teachers, it was found that the former teachers tended to report lower salaries than the current teachers with whom they were matched. (EM)

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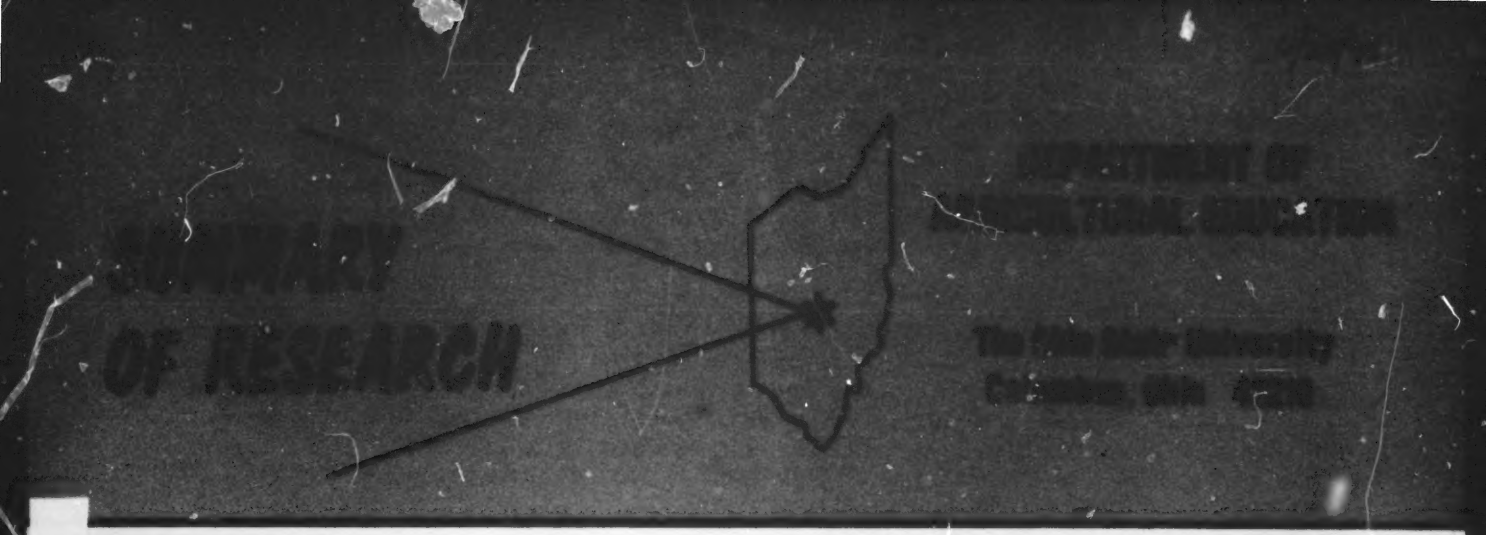

ED 164 883

WHY VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE TEACHERS IN OHIO LEAVE TEACHING

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

A national study conducted at The Ohio State University in 1965, revealed a shortage of vocational agriculture teachers in the United States (Woodin 1967). Every year since that first national supply and demand study was conducted, a shortage of vocational agriculture teachers has been reported (Craig 1976). In fact, as of August 1, 1975, there were 211 teachers needed but not available nationally and the number of teachers on emergency certificates totaled 607 (Craig 1976).

The state of Ohio has also been faced with a shortage of vocational agriculture teachers for a number of years. A major factor contributing to the shortage of teachers appears to be the number of teachers leaving the profession. In fact, 263 teachers left the teaching of vocational agriculture in Ohio from 1970 to 1975 for reasons other than retirement or death.

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The trend of teachers leaving the profession has generated much concern especially within the profession and it would appear that research might make possible a greater impact upon resolution of the trend.

PURPOSE

The primary aim of this research was to identify the major reasons given by former high school teachers of vocational agriculture in Ohio for leaving teaching from the school years between 1970 and 1975.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Answers were sought to the following questions:

1. According to teachers who left the profession, how did certain factors influence their decisions to leave?

   a. Long range occupational goals

   b. Quantity and quality of vocational agriculture and FFA background

   c. Spouse's attitude toward the profession

   d. Quantity and quality of technical agriculture work experience

   e. Preparation

      1. professional

      2. technical

   f. Salary level

   g. Teaching effectiveness

   h. Extra-curricular activities

   i. Working hours

   j. Advancement opportunities

2. How did interpersonal relations with certain groups enter into the decision to leave?

   a. Students

   b. Peers

      1. other teachers in the school

      2. other vocational agriculture teachers

c. Supervisors

d. Administrators

e. Teacher educators

3. When considering selected professional factors, how did former teachers compare with teachers continuing in the profession?

   a. Salary level

   b. Working conditions (class load, class size, extra-curricular responsibilities, adult education responsibilities, time commitments)

   c. Preparation

      1. professional (undergraduate courses, graduate courses and inservice work)

      2. technical (undergraduate courses, graduate courses, inservice work and years of related work experience)

   d. Number of years in vocational agriculture and FFA in high school

   e. Years of teaching experience

   f. Marital status and number of children

   g. Age

PROCEDURE

The following steps were followed in this study:

1. A review of related literature was conducted to identify factors that other research had reported as being influential in the decision of former teachers to leave the profession. This review was an aid in refining the research questions and gave major direction in the development of research instruments.

2. The research instruments for both former and current teachers were developed and refined with specific input by a panel of experts representing members of each group, teacher educators and state supervisors. The instruments were both field tested and further refined as a result of the tests.

3. One hundred and fifty former teachers were selected at random to participate in the study. Based upon the dates that former teachers had entered teaching, a stratified random sample of 150 current teachers was developed.

4. All persons selected for the study were mailed appropriate questionnaires. After several attempts to locate former teachers, 134 correct addresses were obtained and each individual was sent a questionnaire. One hundred and one responded and 15 were followed up by a phone interview, bringing the number of respondents to 116 or 86.6 percent of those who received the questionnaire. One hundred eighteen of the 150 current teachers responded and fifteen were followed up with phone interviews raising the number of respondents to 133 or 88.7 percent.

5. The data were then analyzed with assistance of the Instruction and Research Computer Center of The Ohio State University.

FINDINGS

Influential Factors

A five point scale ranging from (1) no influence to (5) very much influence was used for 45 factors on the research questionnaire for former teachers. Those who responded to the 45 factors reported that certain factors were more influential in their decision to leave the profession. Table 1 on page 8 depicts the 15 highest ranking factors by mean item score. Note that the five factors which were ranked highest by mean score are:

1. Long range occupational goal was something different than teaching vocational agriculture

2. Had students in class who should not have been in vocational agriculture

3. Inadequate advancement opportunities

4. Long hours

5. Inadequate salary

These factors were also the most frequently cited as one of the top three factors leading to the decision of former teachers to leave the profession. When considering an intensity score, based upon whether the factor was selected as the first, second or third most influential in the decision of former teachers to leave, these five factors again ranked highest (Table 2 page 9).

Categories of Influence

The 45 factors were placed into seven basic categories for the purpose of determining if certain groups of factors tend to be more influential in the decision of former teachers to leave the profession. The ranking of those categories from most influential to least influential based upon the mean item score is as follows:

1. Student Related Concerns (Mean Item Score = 2.19)

2. Time Requirements of the Job (Mean Item Score = 2.16)

3. Job Characteristics (Mean Item Score = 2.16)

4. Personal Concerns (Mean Item Score = 2.03)

5. Administrative and Supervisory Concerns (Mean Item Score = 1.77)

6. Preparation for Teaching (Mean Item Score = 1.74)

7. Factors Outside the Profession (Mean Item Score = 1.60)

Relationship of Demographic Factors to Influential Factors

In an attempt to develop an understanding of the reported information on demographic factors and their relationship to the influential factors, a series of correlation coefficients were computed. Four findings significant at the .05 level were identified and are as follows:

1. As time spent in supervision of students' occupational experience programs increased, former teachers generally reported student learning difficulties and discipline problems as being less influential in their decision to leave.

2. Generally, the more time a former teacher reported being involved in in-class young farmer and/or adult instruction, in supervision of students' occupational experience programs, and in FFA activities, the more frequent the individuals reported time factors at higher levels of influence on the decision to leave teaching.

3. The higher the reported salary during the last year of teaching the less influential the factor "Inadequate Salary" generally became.

4. The more years a former teacher taught, generally the less influential became "Job Characteristics" and "Student related Concerns" as a group.

Interpersonal Relations

A number of factors dealing with interpersonal relations were included on the questionnaire to former teachers and did receive some attention. Generally, those areas that provided the greatest opportunity for contact were more influential in the decision to leave the profession. Interpersonal relations with students and administrators appeared to fall into such a category with the student factors being the most influential.

Comparison of Former and Current Teachers

In order to make a comparison between former teachers and current teachers on specified factors, the groups were matched on the dates of entry into the profession. It was found that the two groups were remarkably alike

on such demographic factors as marital status, age, and number of children. However, for the time former teachers taught, they tended to report lower salaries at the same point in time than the continuing vocational agriculture teachers with whom they were matched.

Some data were gathered on each group for which there were not comparative data. For example, it was found that teachers of vocational agriculture who left teaching, tended to do so very early in their career. Nearly 50 percent left teaching before they had taught more than three years. It was also found that teachers who left the profession were very stable occupationally. Over 90 percent of the former teachers have held only one or two jobs since leaving the profession.

One of the very significant factors identified in the study was the relative closeness of current teachers' place of employment to the home of their parents and their spouses' parents. Figure 1 on page 10 depicts the comparative distance from the place of employment to the homes of current teachers' parents and the homes of the spouses' parents in 1974. Note the heavy concentration of teachers who lived close to both their homes and their spouses' homes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of recommendations are made by the investigator as a result of the information obtained by the study.

1. The long range occupational goal of teachers of vocational agriculture may often be something other than teaching. Additional information is needed to better understand the effects of this factor. Research on the long range goals of students entering the teacher education program, students graduating from that program, beginning teachers entering teaching and teachers as they leave the profession, would seem appropriate.

2. As a group of factors, student related concerns were reported by former teachers as most influential on their decision to leave the profession. Are teachers unable to cope with discipline and control of students; are students becoming more difficult to control in school; or are students in programs where they really have little or no interest? Further research is needed in this area.

3. Of great concern to former teachers were the factors related to time commitments. In light of teacher negotiation efforts and expectation levels of teachers in general, are the traditional expectations held by state supervision, teacher education, and the leadership of the state and national teacher organizations for vocational agriculture teachers appropriate? It would seem that research should be conducted on time expectations and demands for teachers of vocational agriculture.

4. Former teachers indicated much concern about the nature of the job itself. A number of comments were made to the effect that new and additional responsibilities were periodically added but that nothing was ever taken away. The investigator recommends that research be conducted on the role expectations for vocational agriculture teachers.

5. A significant finding in the study related to the relative closeness that current teachers live to parents' homes and the homes of the spouses' parents'. Do teachers who leave the profession accept jobs closer to home? It would seem appropriate to investigate this phenomenon further by looking at the employment history of ag teachers and their migration patterns.

6. Many teachers continue in the profession and make it their life's work. Research on the factors that influence teachers to stay in the profession would seem a profitable area for attention.

NATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Generally the factors identified in this study as being the most influential in the decision of teachers to leave the teaching of vocational agriculture in Ohio have been identified in nearly every research study conducted on this question in diverse state settings. This would appear to indicate that these factors are significant on a national basis. Such factors as long range occupational goals, advancement opportunities, time commitments, stages at which teachers leave the profession and program expectations would appear appropriate for the profession to give attention.

TABLE 1

HIGHEST FIFTEEN FACTORS BY MEAN SCORE

	Factor	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
1.	*Long range occupational goal was something different than teaching vocational agriculture (Personal)	3.19	1.50
2.	Had students in class who should not have been in vocational agriculture (Student)	2.96	1.52
3.	Inadequate advancement opportunities (Job)	2.77	1.56
4.	Long hours (Time)	2.50	1.43
5.	Inadequate salary (Job)	2.43	1.23
6.	Too many required extra-curricular activities (Time)	2.42	1.34
7.	Students lacked interest (Student)	2.40	1.31
8.	Requirement for submitting state reports (Administrative)	2.32	1.24
9.	Inadequate administrative support and backing on decisions (Administrative)	2.30	1.59
10.	Disliked student attitudes (Student)	2.29	1.37
11.	Too many meetings to attend as a vocational agriculture teacher (Time)	2.27	1.33
12.	Was unable to get students to learn as desired (Student)	2.25	1.27
13.	Too many evening responsibilities (Time)	2.20	1.39
14.	Too much preparation time required for classroom teaching (Time)	2.14	1.09
15.	Inadequate facilities (Job)	2.10	1.29

*Only factor with a mode of 5.00

TABLE 2

RANKING OF TOP FIVE FACTORS ACCORDING TO MEAN SCORE, FREQUENCY IN TOP THREE AND INTENSITY SCORE

Factor	Mean Score	Rank	Frequency in Top 3	Intensity
1. Long range occupational goal was something different than teaching vocational agriculture	3.19	1	1	1
2. Had students in class who should not have been in vocational agriculture	2.96	2	3	5
3. Inadequate advancement opportunities	2.77	3	2	2
4. Long hours	2.50	4	5	4
5. Inadequate salary	2.43	5	4	3

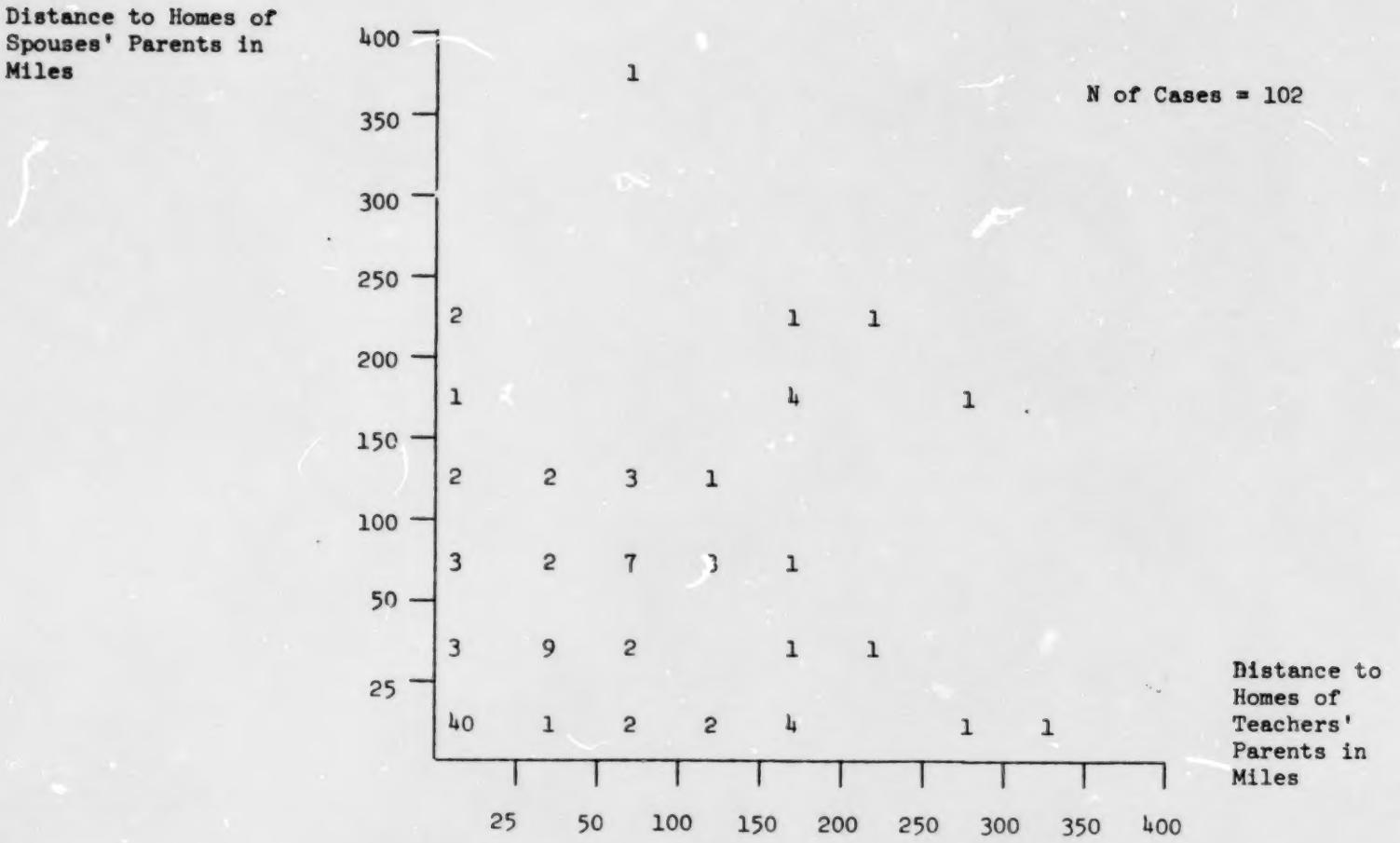

FIGURE 1 COMPARATIVE DISTANCE FROM PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT TO THE HOMES OF CURRENT TEACHERS' PARENTS AND THE HOMES OF THE SPOUSES' PARENTS IN 1974

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SUMMARY OF RESEARCH SERIES

The shortage of vocational agriculture teachers in the United States has been a major concern of the profession for a number of years. Many have blamed the shortage on insufficient numbers of teachers preparing to enter the field. A related concern is the retention of teachers now employed. The authors of this study examine the reasons vocational agriculture teachers leave teaching. The findings should be useful in making teaching more attractive and in better preparing personnel for the situations they will face in schools.

This summary is based on a dissertation conducted as part of a Doctor of Philosophy program by James A. Knight under the direction of Ralph E. Bender. Dr. Knight is currently an Assistant Professor at The Ohio State University. Dr. Bender is Chairman, Department of Agricultural Education, The Ohio State University. Special appreciation is due David G. Craig, Associate Professor of Vocational-Technical Education at The University of Tennessee and Dr. Richard H. Wilson, Professor at The Ohio State University for their critical review of this manuscript prior to its publication.

Research has been an important function of the Department of Agricultural Education since it was established in 1917. Research conducted by the Department has generally been in the form of graduate theses, staff studies and funded research. It is the purpose of this series to make useful knowledge from such research available to practitioners in the profession. Individuals desiring additional information on this topic should examine the references cited in the bibliography.

J. David McCracken, Chairman
Department Research Committee

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